When God Is Silent  
Matthew 15:21-28 (NKJV)

Our scripture text this morning is in the Gospel of Matthew chapter fifteen. We will be reading verses 21-28.

Matthew 15:21-28 (NKJV)

21 Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.
22 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.”
23 But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.”
24 But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”
25 Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!”
26 But He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.”
27 And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”
28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

PRAYER
In this fifteenth chapter of Matthew, the tide of public opinion has started to turn against Jesus, especially by the Jewish religious leaders. Just one chapter earlier, in Matthew 14, John the Baptist had been beheaded, which was a clear indication Jesus was now in the “crosshairs” of the opposition.

The Gospels only record two times when Jesus ventured outside the land of Israel into Gentile lands. One is recorded in Mark 5, when Jesus went into the land of the Gadarenes, which is modern day Jordan. This was where Jesus drove the demons out of the Gadarene demoniac into the pigs that ran over the cliff and drowned. The other occasion went into a Gentile land is recorded here in our text in Matthew 15. This time Jesus went into the land of the Phoenicians, which we know today as Lebanon.

It was here Jesus met a woman of Canaan. Some translations refer to her as the Canaanite woman.

The Canaanites were some of the original inhabitants of the land of Israel that were to be driven out of the Promised Land in the days of Joshua. After their expulsion from the Promised Land, many of the Canaanites settled in the land of Phoenicia along the Mediterranean Sea. In fact they became known as “Sea dwellers.”

The Canaanites were a very wicked people. They worshiped the false gods of Baal and Ashterah. They openly practiced incest, adultery, ceremonial prostitution, black magic, witchcraft and sorcery. As abominable as all these practices were, perhaps the most abominable of all was that the Canaanites sacrificed their own children in fire to the false gods they worshipped.

When you take all this into consideration it makes the faith of this Canaanite woman in our text even more remarkable!
As we turn our thoughts back to the text, there are two key thoughts I would like for us to focus our attention on.

First of all, let's consider............

I. The SILENCE of The SAVIOR (vs. 21-23a)

vs. 21-23a Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.” **But He answered her not a word.**

1. Demon possession is something that is relatively foreign to us here in America, except what we have seen in horror movies. But talk to any American missionary who spent any length of time in a foreign land and they will likely have many stories to tell about their encounters with those who are demon possessed.

    **ILLUSTRATION:** When I was in India several years ago, in one of the villages where I preached there was a demon-possessed woman. Her face was grossly distorted.....her eyes had a look of death.......and she let out loud, unearthly screams unlike anything I had ever heard before. The two Indian preachers with me strictly warned me not to touch her or to allow her to touch me because she was prone to violent fits of rage.

2. Demon-possession in Jesus' day was often characterized by loud shrieks or screams.......convulsions.......violence against other people.............cutting of one's own body.......and throwing one's body into a fire.
3. You can just hear the emotional pain in this Canaanite woman's voice as she cries out to Jesus, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.”

4. But notice Jesus' response, “But He answered her not a word.”

This seems so out of character for Jesus. The Gospels teach us that Jesus is a loving, caring, compassionate Savior who's heart was touched by the suffering of others.

5. The sense of hopelessness and despair in this mother's voice certainly must have been obvious to Jesus, and yet when she asked Him to do something “He answered her not a word.”

6. Just like the Canaanite woman, many of us have experienced the deafening silence of GOD. How many times have you prayed and prayed and prayed about something, only to get a seemingly stone, cold response from GOD?

7. The silence of GOD, especially in times of hopeless desperation, can “rattle our faith” if we're not careful. In moments of weakness and doubt we can misinterpret the LORD'S silence to mean He doesn't LOVE us or He doesn't CARE for us, or that He doesn't HEAR and ANSWER our prayers after all.
8. Do you know some of the Bible's greatest men of faith experienced “the silence of GOD.”

* In the **BOOK OF JOB** we read the tragic account of how Job lost all his children and all his possessions in one twenty four hour period. *JOB cries out to GOD time and time again only to be met with cold silence.* In fact, it isn’t until **JOB 38, just five chapters before the end of the book** that GOD finally breaks His silence and responds to Job.

**THE PROPHET ELIJAH** experienced “the silence of God” too.

In **I KINGS 19** God told Elijah to go stand on a mountain. The Lord passed by Elijah and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain breaking apart the rocks, but the LORD wasn’t in the wind. Then a powerful earthquake shook the mountain, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. Then there was a raging fire on the mountain, but the LORD wasn’t in the fire. Finally there was the sound of a gentle whisper that was barely audible to Elijah's ears. It was in that “still small voice of a whisper” Elijah realized he had heard the voice of God.”

* Even **JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF** knew “the silence of God.” Remember when Jesus was dying on the cross, He cried out, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”

*And remember **THE APOSTLE PAUL** prayed three times for the LORD to remove his “thorn -in- the- flesh?” And the LORD didn't answer his prayer, at least as far as removing the physical infirmity. Instead, the LORD’S answer was, "My grace is sufficient for you."
9. So when the Canaanite woman cried out to Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter, she experienced “the deafening silence of the LORD” that many before her and many after her have experienced.

“He answered her NOT a word!”

Normally when someone meets a stone cold response from someone they react on one of two ways: Either they get angry or they get discouraged and just walk away.

But the Canaanite woman didn't respond to Jesus' silence in either of these ways. Notice..................

II. The SINCERE FAITH of The CANAANITE WOMAN (23b-27)

23b And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.”

24 But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

25 Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!”

26 But He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.”

27 And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”
1. The persistence of this Canaanite woman is strikingly similar to that of “The Persistent Widow” in Luke chapter eighteen.

Notice, the disciples asked Jesus to “send her away, for she cries out after us.”

When she didn't get a response from Jesus, she turned to His disciples, perhaps believing they might be able persuade Jesus to grant her request.

2. Jesus responded to His disciples, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” What did Jesus mean by that? “The lost sheep of the house of Israel” naturally refers to the Jewish people. Jesus is telling His disciples, “I was sent to minister to the Jewish people, not Gentiles like this Canaanite woman.”

3. When the Canaanite woman heard what Jesus said she came and probably fell on her knees before Jesus and begged Him, “LORD, help me!”

4. Jesus' response to her is very interesting. He says in verse 26, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” Was Jesus calling this woman “a dog?” Not in the derrogatory sense we might think. The children refers to the Jewish people. “Dogs” was the symbolic name used to describe all Gentiles or all non-Jews.

5. Now listen to the expression of this woman's faith in verse 27, “Yes, LORD, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table.”

What she is saying is, “Lord, I am willing to accept even the tiniest act of mercy and compassion from You on behalf of my daughter. I will take anything you are willing to give me.”
Jesus was so moved by this woman’s great faith, He healed her demon-possessed daughter that very hour.

CONCLUSION

This wonderful passage teaches you and me a valuable lesson about what our response should be in those times when we ourselves experience THE SILENCE OF GOD.

By not saying a single word it would appear Jesus didn’t HEAR the woman’s plea and didn’t CARE about her suffering daughter, when nothing could be further from the truth. HE HEARD and HE CARED. The same is true when our prayers go un-answered for what seems like a long, long time. We must not mistake the Lord’s silence as meaning He hasn't heard our prayer or that He doesn't care about our situation, because He does.

ISAIAH 55:8,9 (NKJV) “ For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

Suppose for a moment that GOD did give us everything we asked for the very moment we asked for it. Suppose God removed every little pain, every little problem, every difficulty, and every hardship the very moment we asked Him to. What would become of us? We would become selfish, weak, immature Christians who could not handle the slightest trial or trouble. We would remain spiritual children and never mature.
Though it may not seem like it at the time, there is a good reason for GOD’S SILENCE.........

*When God is silent **WE WILL MORE EARNESTLY SEEK HIM.**
*When God is silent **THE GENUINENESS OF OUR FAITH IS TESTED.**
*When God is silent **WE ARE REMINDED OF OUR OWN HUMAN WEAKNESS.**
*When God is silent **OUR HUNGER AND THIRST FOR HIM GREATLY INTENSIFIES.**
*When God is silent **WE ARE REMINDED JUST HOW MUCH WE NEED HIM.**

**ILLUSTRATION**

Many of us can followed the news story back in 2010 of thirty three miners in Chile who were trapped 2,300 feet below the earth's surface. For days those miners heard nothing but dead silence from above them. No doubt the thoughts they might never be rescued crossed their minds many times. Finally after seventeen days the silence was broken when a drill pierced the ceiling of the mine. **THE MINERS KNEW THEN THAT “HELP WAS ON THE WAY.”**

After 69 long days, all thirty three of the miners were rescued in relatively good health.

Perhaps this morning there is someone here who has been trapped in tough situation for a long time, and you have prayed and prayed and prayed about it and yet, **“the LORD has answered you not a word.”**

Rest assured this morning **the LORD has heard your prayers and He cares about your need.** In His time and in His way, **the LORD will break His silence. HELP IS ON THE WAY!**

I leave you with these words that were found scrawled by some Jewish people hiding in a dungeon to escape Hitler's death camps: **I believe in the sun, even when it isn’t shining....I believe in love, even when I am alone.....I believe in GOD, even when HE is silent!**